

The Hon. Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2021

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

The undersigned 54 education and related national associations support the \$7.6 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund, contained in the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2021, S. Con. Res. 5, that allow would allow Federal Communications to provide one-time emergency support for schools and libraries to purchase technology and devices needed for Internet connectivity through the E-rate program.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and schools continue to adapt to in school, hybrid and remote learning, students and educators lacking Internet access are at great disadvantage, or worse, shut out of teaching and learning. According to a recent study¹, 12 million K-12 students continue to lack the Internet connectivity at home needed to complete schoolwork nearly a year into this pandemic. They are caught in cruelest aspect of the digital divide – the “homework gap” – because they are unable to participate in online learning, after-school enrichment, and programs that help address loss of opportunities to learn during this difficult time. Also, a disproportionate number of students lacking Internet access are black, brown or indigenous, come from low-income households, and rural areas.

Given the clear, demonstrated need and continuing crisis engendered by the pandemic, we ask the committee to act with haste to appropriate \$7.6 billion in one-time, short-term emergency funding to the E-rate program as part of America’s Rescue Plan. A program that schools and libraries know and trust, the E-rate is the quickest, most efficient, and most importantly, most *equitable way*, to disseminate funds to help schools and libraries connect K-12 students with Internet access and appropriate connected devices. In addition, the Emergency Connectivity Fund would help ensure we connect all K-12 students caught in the homework gap during this pandemic.

Congress must face up to this issue right now. As we wrote back in [April](#) , [July](#), [November](#) and [December](#), *time is of the essence*. Every day that passes is another that students go without ubiquitous access to teaching and learning. **Without specific, targeted funds to help students who do not have Internet access** - whether it is Internet service, devices or both – **we are denying students the fundamental right to an education.**

Sincerely,

AASA, The School Superintendents Association
Advance CTE
Alliance for Excellent Education
American Federation of School Administrators

¹ See Common Sense Media’s report on “[Looking Back, Looking Forward: What it will take to permanently close the K-12 Digital Divide.](#)”

American Federation of Teachers
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
ASCD
Association of Educational Service Agencies
Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO)
Children's Health Fund
Code.org
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Committee for Children
Common Sense
CoSN - Consortium for School Networking
Council for Exceptional Children
Council of Administrators of Special Education
Council of Chief State School Officers
Family Centered Treatment Foundation
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
IDEA Public Schools
International Society for Technology in Education
KIPP
Learning Forward
Magnet Schools of America
MENTOR National
National Association for Music Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Independent Schools
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)
National Catholic Educational Association
National Center for Families Learning
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
National Education Association
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium
National Rural Education Association
National School Boards Association
Parents as Teachers
Partners for Education at Berea College
Project Tomorrow
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Secretariat of Catholic Education, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Stand for Children
Teach For America
The Education Trust